THE

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Quid faciam vis?

HOR.

Those, who in the perusal of these pages, expect to find the grandeur of Johnson, the taste of Addison, the beauty of Steele, will probably be disappointed. Such writers have passed like a dream from the stage of existence, and left the scene bare & deserted. The vast republic of letters knows them only by their works. No new corruscations of genius like theirs are seen to flash. The wreath that encircles their front is full of leaves. Their places are occupied no longer. The long career of Essayists has terminated in a few

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straggling writers, of short-lived renown and feeble abilities.

Such being our opinion, some person will probably ask, "and why are you adding to that number? Why are you endeavoring to swell the catalogue of inferior essayists?" — we answer:— we do it for the improvement, if not indeed of others, at least of ourselves. We are striving to catch a spark of that etherial flame which plays around the departed glories of our illustrious models. We are setting out upon a career of mental improvement; and why should we not be permitted to indulge in the innocent amusement afforded us by writing a periodical essay? — From the busy scenes of life, we would gladly turn to such an employment, and by endeavouring to concentrate into a focus the few sparks of genius we may each of us possess, wake into

an aspiring blaze the ardor of our souls.

Again, we think we hear some one asking, — "why do you choose the name of the Aeronaut for your essay? Are you so bold & daring, that you are about to ascend above your cotemporaries, & look down upon them from your lofty elevation with supercilious contempt? Beware, lest with Icarus, your resources fail, & you fall into remediless oblivion." — Our reply is: — We have chosen the appellation of the Aeronaut for none of the reasons you have assigned. We wish to look down with no contempt upon our cotemporaries. We wish only to follow the sublime aspirations of those who in their invention of their airy car, thought to travel over every region, & trace every sea. The Aeronaut can only catch a glimpse as he passes along of what is beneath. This we ~~wish to do~~ desire to do; to

snatch a few rays of the scenes we may behold, and be enabled to make a ~~faint~~ portrait of them, faint indeed, but sufficient for our purpose. The Aeronaut is confined by no limits. He may soar on high, emulating the bird of Jove, or keep along the ground fearful to rise to too great a height. He has an opportunity of beholding nations & countries & seas spread as in a map before him; of ~~beho~~ inspecting the manners of mankind, and making observations on their employments & their pursuits. Inconstant as the breeze that floats him, he sees a constant succession & endless variety. Nothing external is concealed from his observation. Nothing curiosity can escape his notice.

Thus have we endeavored to shew, that our attempt is the very reverse of arrogance & presumption. We mean not to pretend to take deep & inside

views of things; but to skim over the surface, & make use of what we may happen to behold. If we cannot instruct others, we will at least strive to amuse them; and if we fail even in that, we shall have the satisfaction of reflecting that ~~it~~ such was our ~~not~~ intention.

The hand of time has not indeed for us opened a long retrospective view. Age has not indeed silvered our hairs with the hoar, nor has long experience filled us with those just conceptions of human character, which are the characteristics, generally speaking, of that period of life.

Scribimus indocti; —

yet, let the flights of fancy compensate for the want of deep discrimination and accurate knowledge.

From the ignorant & the malevolent we ask no opinion with regard

to the merits of our work; it is from the candid & the observing only that we desire an opinion. Their praise will add a laurel to our brows as yet uncrowned; their censure will stimulate us to higher exertions.

We shall now proceed to speak more particularly of the plan of our undertaking. The essays are to be confined to no particular subject within the range of general literature. Polemical discussions and party politics must be ~~banished~~ interdicted from our pages for ever; The hydra of faction must not there be permitted to shew her ~~hydra~~ head. If we now & then attempt to satirize the reigning follies of the age, we shall not, be assured, transport the reader into the air, and present, as the demon did to the wondering Cleofas, a bare & naked picture of

every vice & every enormity. Ours be rather the task of endeavoring to throw a veil over the frailties of man, and of depicting him in his truer colors, as the child of heaven, the emanation ~~from~~ from divinity. Let us rather drop a tear over human misery, than draw with malevolent hand the curtain aside; let us pourtray the virtues, the nobleness, the valor, the loftiness of man. Let us seek his communion, not in the dens of iniquity, not in the habitations of horror, but in the bowers of learning, the groves of Academus, the scenes of benevolence, the fields of glory. When we do raise the lash, let it be against the wilful follies of society, not against the failings & frailties of humanity. The latter deserve our commiseration and our friendship.

He that would brutally laugh to scorn the misfortune of a fellow-being, deserves not the name of man. He that would expose to public ridicule & contempt the miseries of human nature, and blazon forth with the trumpet of slanderous report what ought to be soothed into slumber, & kept locked in silence, is a monster, beneath whom the earth groans, & from whom society should shrink as from the messenger of the plague. Nay, more so; for the latter may lay in an untimely tomb indeed every thing that is lovely, & illustrious, & honorable yet round their tombs their glory may still shine, & the tear of sorrow drop upon their sacred turf; whereas the former stabs with one foul thrust the peace of mind, the splendor of reputation. The wounds which he inflicts are never healed;

the good name he blasts can never be recovered.

"Good name, in man, or woman,
Is the immediate jewel of their souls:
Who steals my purse, steals trash; 'tis
something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, & has been slave to
Thousands;
But he, that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that, which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed."

Othello.

Such a characters we emulate not; such a picture we wish never to be drawn of us. The satirist has abundant scope for his sarcasms in the many follies which every day occur in life. There are many, who by their ridiculous extravagance & excesses, make themselves proper objects for the keenest lash of satire. To such, & to such alone, shall we confine our attention.

Our prospects therefore, if not altogether encouraging, are not on the other hand without something of pleasurable anticipation. Our aspirations are above those of the moralist & the Beau. If we cannot fill our pages with sound literature, we will at least keep clear of utter nonsense.

The present state of the world is favorable to our undertaking. The subjects on which the pen may be employed are more various than formerly, and the means of acquiring information respecting them more easy. Universal peace envelopes the world. All mankind seem verging towards that period of harmony & of knowledge, which bards have sung, & prophets foretold. The clarion of war is hushed; the sword & the banner buried on the plains of Waterloo. The pæan of deliverance, the triumphal

hymn of gratitude to heaven, resound from every quarter. The cause of religion, the banner of the cross, is gaining ground continually; & the whole extent of the civilised world is rapidly improving in every branch of human knowledge, while they are extending the blessings of science & civilisation to the vast number of human beings, who have so long lain slumbering in the midnight of moral darkness, the chaos of the intellectual faculties.

Our own country, in common with the other nations, is proceeding in this noble career. Science is gaining ground, & literature becomes more flourishing every day. The sparks of genius are awakening into a glorious flame. To the future we may look forward with a throb of delightful hope, & confident expectation:—

"Yes! there are hearts, prophetic hope may trust
That slumber yet in unrevealed dust,
Ordain'd to fire th'adoring sons of earth
With every charm of wisdom & of worth;
Ordained to light, with intellectual day,
The many wheels of Nature as they play,
Or warm with fancy's energy, to glow,
And rival all but Shakespeare's name below." Campbell

We have thus a wide field open for the exercise of the few abilities we may possess. The circumstance of our paper being conducted by several hands, will cause a considerable variety in the style and manner. Perhaps a short account of our club would not be unacceptable to the reader.

We meet once a week, to read over the essay we have prepared. Apart from the busy noise of life, we

pursue only what friendship dictates. Linked in bonds of harmony & peace, we find in one another's company one of the chief enjoyments of life; for to a mind not corrupted by sordid sensuality, or degraded by vice, (as we trust we are not,) literary society is ever pleasing and capable of producing the greatest delight. There at least is a place where discord cannot enter, where faction is struck dumb. There, the talents of several may be concentrated, the paths of knowledge rendered sweet & pleasant, and the cares of life exchanged for the joys of social & literary retirement.

We are neither old batchelors, nor snarling critics. The buoyancy of youth has not ceased to be felt. We have most of our opinions yet

to form. We are just venturing on the shoreless ocean of life; & if we linger awhile on the brink to gather the flowers that please our senses, why should we not be indulged? The distant prospect would be cheerless & melancholy indeed, if we were not permitted in the outset to furnish ourselves with the means of enjoyment in the long & dreary voyage. The flowers we speak of are those of the most fragrant kind; the enjoyments we allude to the most refined & the most delightful. We would gain those which can alone confer lasting satisfaction. We would pluck flowers for our wreath, which might bloom forever. We would be ambitious to procure a name, which might be handed to posterity, not like that of the Ephesian incendiary, amid the fir

of its desolation; not like that of Alexander, or of Cæsar, drenched in blood, and bedewed with streams of gore; but nurtured in the heart & cherished in the bosom, watered by the tears of sympathy, endeared to the recollection by all the kindlier affections of the human heart. He would aspire to gain a fame, not trumpeted on the winds of heaven, nor heard amid ten thousand acclamations; but in the beautiful expression of a modern writer, "like the breathing of the softest flute after the clang of a thousand trumpets; or the downy contact of the halcyon's breast which stills the stormy sea."*

Reader! whosoever thou art,

* Simpson's "visit to Flanders."

judge not too harshly of our production. If thou art young, reflect that like thee, we are inexperienced. If thou art ~~old~~ ~~or~~ more advanced in years, remember that thou once didst share the same feelings with ourselves. For ourselves, we shall rest contented, if while we

_____ weave

Our flowerets together, Wisdom can see
One bright drop or two, that has fallin on
The leaves
From her fountain divine. Moore.

E.